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Redevelopment Board Minutes 02/28/2011

Minutes of Monday, February 28, 2011
 Arlington Redevelopment Board
 2nd Floor Conference Room, Town Hall
 Approved 3/14/11:

Members Present:
 Michael Cayer
 Mr. Fields Fields
 Mr. Fitzsimmons Fitzsimmons
 Mr. Loreti Loreti, Chairman
 Andrew West

Mr. Loreti opened the meeting at 7:00pm. He noted that Planning Director and Executive Secretary Carol Kowalski could not be present this evening, and Laura Wiener, Senior Planner was sitting in for her.

Symmes update. Ms. Wiener reported that Ms. Kowalski spoke with Liz Paulson of PNC Bank, lender of the Symmes property, who reported receiving 5-6 informal proposals from developers for the property. She would be reviewing them and then sending a smaller number along to the Town. Mr. Cayer requested that as many as possible be brought to the board for their review. Mr. Fields concurred. Mr. West asked if any Town Meeting action was needed to advance the proposals. Ms. Wiener responded that 2 town meeting articles have been filed that relate to affordable housing at Symmes. Mr. Loreti noted that there have been some community concerns about snow dumping, and that the ARB has not authorized snow dumping on the site except by the Town of Arlington. Mr. Cayer and Mr. Fields agreed that no one other than the town should dump snow there. Mr. Fitzsimmons raised the issue of the existing special permit for the site. The Board needs to clarify whether or not it is still in effect. The State passed the Permit Extension Act, which added 2 years time to any permit then in effect. Mr. Loreti requested that the issue be put on the agenda for the next ARB meeting, with permit extension information provided by staff.

Open Space Plan. Mr. Loreti noted that the ARB had previously voted to endorse without exception the Town's Open Space Plan. More precise and official language is now being sought. Mr. West moved that the Arlington Redevelopment Board, in its capacity as the town's planning board, officially adopt the 2007 - 2014 Arlington Open Space and Recreation Plan. Seconded by Mr. Fields. Voted unanimously.

23 Maple St. There is an article on the Town Meeting Warrant to move jurisdiction of 23 Maple Street from ARB to BoS. Mr. Loreti asked if the Board wanted to provide input to the Selectmen before their hearing on March 28 regarding this property, particularly about the parking. The tenant at 23 Maple wants to renew the lease, which expires July 31, 2011. Mr. Fitzsimmons asked if the Town is limited to CPI increases in raising the rent. Mr. Cayer asked if the ARB could sell the property. The Board then suspended discussion to go into the Public Hearing, scheduled for 7:30.

EDR Special Permit Amendment, 1406 Massachusetts Avenue, to approve a sign and awning for "Gymboree".

Sarah Jacobs, Gymboree Operations Manager for Arlington, Newton and Acton, and Casey Piche, representing the owner, Bierbrier Development were present. Mr. Piche noted that an amendment to the Special Permit was needed for a new sign. Although the tenant has 2 frontages, it is only using one for its sign, which will be internally illuminated. Mr. Loreti asked if the sign frame would be the same size as, and match the height of "Unleashed". Mr. Piche responded that all the signs were identical, and the sign would match the height of "Unleashed". The letters will be outlined in orange, with the same level of lighting as "Hair Cuttery". Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that the windows are not to be obstructed. Mr. Loreti asked what the hours of illumination would be. Casey responded that the store hours would be opening at 9 am 7 days/week, closing at 6 most nights, and 7:30 on Thursday only. Mr. Loreti said that signs can be illuminated until midnight under the zoning bylaw but should be made consistent with requirements of the other stores covered by this Special Permit. He asked for a Special Permit condition that the signs can be changed with the permission of the Planning Director. Mr. Loreti asked if any members of the public wanted to speak. None responded. Mr. Cayer moved that the permit amendment be approved, subject to the dimensions and height matching "Unleashed". Seconded by Mr. Fitzsimmons. Voted unanimously.

23 Maple Street, continued. Mr. West noted that a good deal of the parking for Central School is located at 23 Maple Street, so separating the two buildings and disposing of 23 Maple would hurt the Town's ability to lease the Central School. Mr. Fields wondered if there could be an easement reserving the right to parking spaces for Central School tenants. The Board requested the following information from staff at the next meeting:

- Look at Central School leases to see how many parking spaces are committed to Central School tenants.
- What is the value of 23 Maple if sold, and what would the property tax revenue to the Town be if sold. If possible, staff should get an informal opinion of value.
- What is the value to the Town if rented.
- Which capital improvements have been done, which are still to be done, and what costs are still outstanding.
- Can the 2 buildings be separated? Is Urban Renewal Plan still in effect?

Mr. Loreti left the meeting at this point. Mr. Fitzsimmons chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Zoning Bylaw Amendments.

Article 6—the Board had no comments

Article 7—Mr. Cayer had a number of editorial comments. He requested that the report be sent to him electronically and he would make them on the document.

Article 8—same as 7

Article 9—same as 7

Articles 10, 11, 12—More info needed. Board asked Ms. Kowalski to invite someone from the Conservation Commission to the Public Hearing on the Warrant Articles.

Article 13—to allow decreasing the affordable housing requirements under certain circumstances in Urban Renewal projects. Mr. West expressed concern that the Board would be pressured to lower the requirement automatically. It is difficult to assess economic feasibility. Mr. Fitzsimmons asked if we give ourselves flexibility will that become the standard? Mr. Cayer said he thought the language was too specific. He thought a(iii) was unnecessary, but wanted opinion of Town Counsel as to whether that would be within the scope.

Article 14—to remove Assisted Living as a category subject to the Affordable Housing Requirements. The Board generally favored this concept, feeling that it would be very impractical to implement as is. They suggested that clarifying wording be added as follows:

ARTICLE 14

Zoning Bylaw Amendment/Affordable Housing Requirements, Definitions, Units

To see if the Town will vote to amend the zoning bylaw, Article 11.08 Affordable Housing Requirements, c. Definitions, Units, by adding, following the phrase "Dwelling Units", "or", and following the phrase "Lodging Units", deleting "or units within Assisted Living Facilities"; and, under the definition of Residential, deleting use item 1.13 or take any action related thereto.

~Article 17—A member of the Board noted that the proponents of this Article, 10 registered voters, would like to allow freestanding signs at Peirce Field to raise revenue for high school sports, to defray athletic fees. Freestanding signs have been opposed in the past because allowing them might open the door to billboards. Mr. Cayer noted that there is

a public benefit involved, with helping a non-profit use. Mr. West noted that they would be temporary signs. Asked about spot zoning, Mr. Fitzsimmons said he did not think that was relevant here because it could apply to all public property. Board supported the idea conceptually (3-1) but more specific language is needed. Staff will invite members of the group to work with Counsel, and attend March 14 Public Hearing.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30.
Respectfully submitted,
Laura Wiener
Senior Planner/Housing Director